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SUBJECT: UDPS TORPEDOS INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION INITIATIVE

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

1. (C) During the November visit of the U.N. Security Council to the DRC, members of Etienne Tshisekedi's UDPS party approached the French Ambassador indicating that the party realized the need to modify the party's rejection of the Transition and election process. In other words, the UDPS was interested in finding a way to participate in elections. Arrangements were made for party representatives to present a paper to the head of the UNSC delegation, French PermRep de la Sabliere. Ultimately Tshisekedi himself showed up, but delivered a paper and verbal position well short of the earlier promises, reiterating a series of unrealistic preconditions, and there was no direct positive movement forward.

2. (C) Despite the disappointing Tshisekedi performance, UDPS members continued to indicate privately that a more fundamental shift in the party position could be had, leading the British Ambassador in particular to undertake what was hoped to be discreet negotiations among the main political parties to see if a formula could be found to bring the UDPS into the process. The International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) endorsed the attempt, and contacts got underway at the level of party Secretaries General. While news (predictably) leaked out of the talks, and President Kabila's PPRD party never formally participated, the outlines of a potential deal appeared to be shaping up. The fourth in a series of formal "discussion" meetings took place last week, with a request for the UDPS representatives to at minimum ensure the party would implicitly allow the December 15 constitution referendum to go forward without a problem, and for CIAT representatives to pressure the Transition government to solve the problem of multiple competing supposed UDPS factions being recognized as legitimate separate UDPS parties.

3. (U) The apparent definitive UDPS response came in the form of a strong public statement delivered personally by Tshisekedi (as reported in septel regarding the run-up to

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Sunday's referendum) delivered yesterday, December 15. The statement asserts that the referendum is being conducted in the context of an "electoral and political process that is exclusive, defective, unjust, and manifestly counter-productive." Tshisekedi called on Congolese to stay at home and not endorse this "betrayal" by their participation in voting. The statement was accompanied by a printed list of six reasons to boycott, including ambiguous morality (apparently regarding a lack of a Constitutional ban of homosexual marriage), the imposition of a text prepared "in a foreign land, by foreigners, for foreigners" (perhaps a reference to the Sun City Accord, which Tshisekedi in fact did sign at the time, or perhaps an incorrect charge that the draft Constitution was prepared abroad), and the circulation of several contradictory versions of the draft Constitution as proof of the treachery of those seeking to promote it.

4. (SBU) At the weekly CIAT meeting on December 15, the British Ambassador acknowledged that the UDPS statement pretty much killed any further hope for bringing Tshisekedi into the process. At least, however, the effort made it clear that the CIAT and international community in general had sought to go the extra mile to get the UDPS engaged in next year's elections.

5. (C) Comment: It is very likely that the UDPS representatives were misrepresenting Tshisekedi's position in their talks with foreign Ambassadors. Indeed, there is a past history of party "moderates" seeking to leverage international influence to obtain change from Tshisekedi. Rarely will party members challenge Tshisekedi directly, as he does not tolerate significant

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dissent within the party. A number of party leaders are not happy with the rigid party stance opposing the electoral process, recognizing that such a policy inevitably contributes to declining influence. At this point, however, it appears that well-known Tshisekedi obstinacy is prevailing over any more nuanced position, and time is quickly running out for the party to become a part of the electoral process.

End comment.
MEECE